

Table of Contents



Features

Around the Horn 5 Not Just America's Pastime 79

News & Notes from your Texas Rangers.

Fresh Faces in New Places 27

Rangers have a busy off-season.

by Bob Matuszak

Community Report 43

Dr Pepper Luncheon Series/Inaugural
Rangers Golf Classic

by Lisa Parris

Mississippi Marvel 46

Jay Powell comes to the Rangers
as a proven bullpen ace.

by Bill Howard

Slow Rollers 55

Q&A with Jeff Zimmerman

Korea's Texan 72

The first from his country to play in
the major leagues, Chan Ho Park is
determined to bring a championship
to his new home in the Lone Star State.

by Jesse Sanchez

Baseball's popularity in Korea
continues to rise.

by Seung-min Lee

Spring Fling 87

This year marked the Texas Rangers
last spring training in Port Charlotte,
Florida, but they leave behind some
wonderful memories.

by Dennis Maffezzoli

Getting Down to Business 119

New Rangers General Manager
John Hart wasted little time in putting
his stamp on the team.

by Rich Rice

The New Regime 127

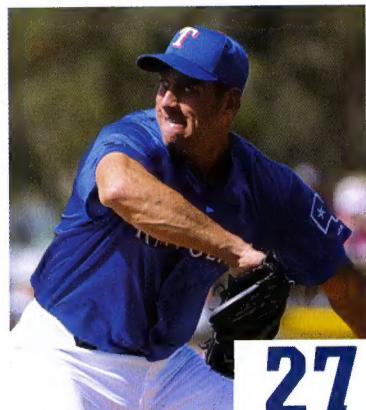
The Rangers feature a new coaching staff.

by Bob Matuszak

They Were America's Heroes 135

On the ballfield and on the battlefield.

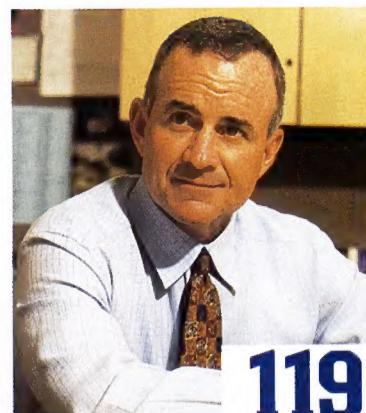
by Ozzie Garza



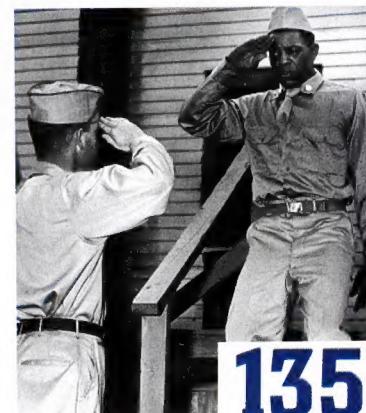
27



72



119



135

Departments

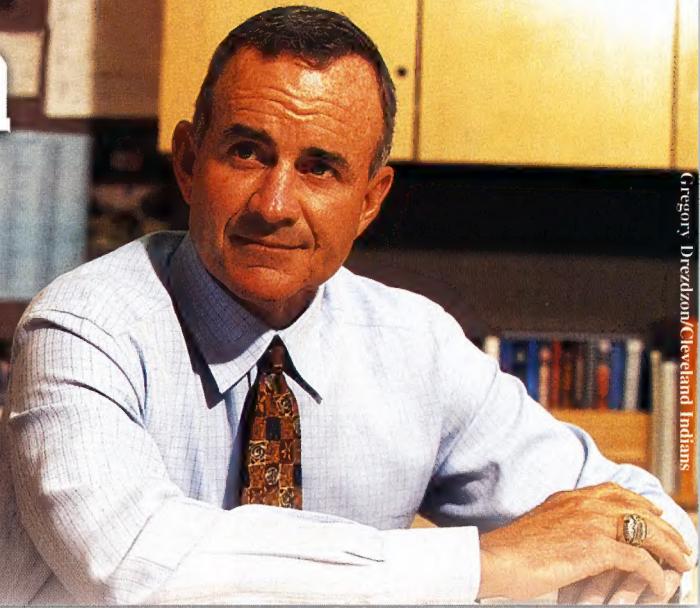
| | | | |
|---|----|----------------------------------|-----|
| Staff Directory | 10 | How to Keep Score | 68 |
| Thomas O. Hicks | | Guide to the Ballpark | 94 |
| Chairman of the Board & Owner | 13 | 2002 Rangers Schedule | 141 |
| Michael J. Cramer | | 2002 Rangers Promotions | 142 |
| President and Chief Operating Officer | 14 | Rangers Television Network | 146 |
| Senior Management | 16 | Television Announcers | 148 |
| General Manager John Hart | 21 | Rangers Radio Network | 150 |
| Manager Jerry Narron | 23 | Radio Announcers | 152 |
| Rangers Coaching Staff | 24 | Minor League Directory | 155 |
| Texas Rangers Player Bios | 33 | Rangers Scouting Staff | 156 |
| Rangers Series Notes | 57 | 2002 MLB All-Star Game | 158 |
| Opponent Feature | 59 | Texas Rangers Foundation | 160 |
| 2002 Rangers roster | 62 | Major League Directories | 163 |
| Opponent Roster | 63 | TexasRangers.com | 168 |
| MLB Pitching Rosters | 64 | Directory of Advertisers | 180 |
| Scorecard | 67 | | |

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Getting Down to Business

New Rangers General Manager John Hart wasted little time in putting his stamp on the team.

By Rich Rice



Gregory Drezdzon/Cleveland Indians

It's a lot of fun to watch someone ply their trade when they do something really well. You know those times, when someone is so good, they leave you shaking your head.

The reason people pay to watch Alex Rodriguez play shortstop at The Ballpark or Pavarotti sing at American Airlines Center is because they can do things that no other person in this world can. It just doesn't provide the same attraction when the Average Joe plays baseball or sings in the shower.

Can you think of anyone who wouldn't care to watch Michael Jordan play basketball, at least in his younger days? Is there anyone who would dispute the precision and grace with which Sarah Hughes skated at the Olympics? Surely no one would argue with the ability of country star George Strait.

None, however, could be more pleasing to watch at their craft than General Manager John Hart was for Rangers fans this off-season. Following his November 1 arrival, Hart did his best Monty Hall impersonation as the club, through trade or free

agency, added 22 players with major league experience that joined the team at spring training. Of that number, 15 were pitchers, an area where the Rangers struggled in the 2001 season.

During his first four months with Texas, Hart seemed to spend a majority of his time at press conferences introducing new players or staff. The frequent changes became almost comical as media members asked Hart, "Are you done yet?" All the maneuvering landed the Rangers with a club record 64 players in spring training camp, including 34 pitchers.

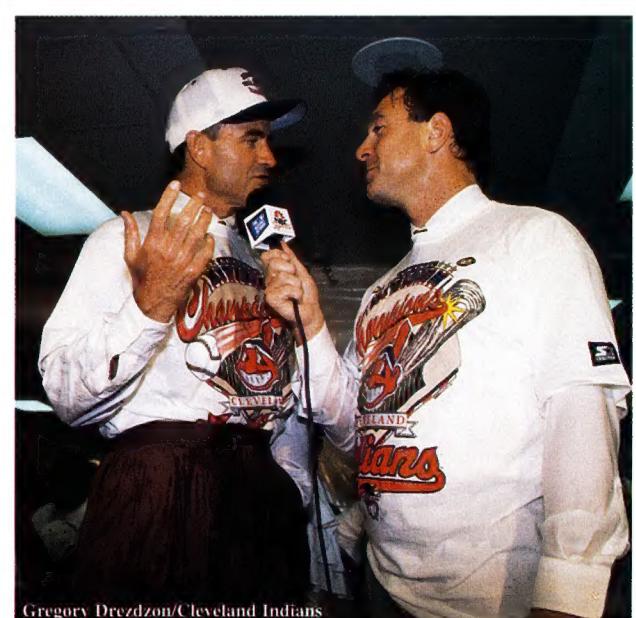
Hart's tendency to adjust the roster has been well documented. He came to Texas from the Cleveland Indians, where he served as general manager for the past ten years. His propensity to make deals and tinker with his roster made the Indians one of the most successful franchises of the 1990's.

When he was named the Indians' general manager at the end of the 1991 season, Hart inherited a club that had not been to the post-season since 1954, and had earned just eight winning



Rangers owner Tom Hicks (left) hired Hart (right) with one purpose in mind — bringing a World Series Championship to Texas.

Hart helped celebrate the Indians 1995 division crown, the team's first trip to the post-season in over 40 years.



Gregory Drezdzon/Cleveland Indians

Getting Down to Business

man in Cleveland coming to an end. He was not pressured to leave, but felt it was time to let his trusted assistant, Mark Shapiro, take over. It was very similar to the way Hart had received his start as a general manager, as former Indians' G.M. Hank Peters gave way to Hart in 1991. Hart announced prior to last season that he would relinquish his duties at the end of the year.

But he didn't sit still for long. Hart was introduced to the Dallas-Fort Worth area at a press conference on November 1, 2001, and hasn't stopped since.

While Hart's entrance onto the Texas scene saw him conducting a large number of player moves, he is quick to acknowledge the difference between the Rangers and Indians situations when he took over. Despite his many changes, he felt there was no reason to think the Rangers were far from moving back into contention after consecutive sub-par years.

The sport is not quite the same these days as it was when Hart began his run with the Indians. When he took the Cleveland job, the Metrodome in Minneapolis was filled to capacity and Twins fans were waving homer hankies in support of their World Series Champions. Those times have given way to the age of big money free agent signings, the new ballpark craze and market size discussions.

Unlike the Indians in 1991, the Rangers are poised for success in the current baseball climate. Having won three division titles over a four-year span in the late 1990's, the Rangers aren't fighting the frustration of futility. The Ballpark in Arlington has revenue capacity and owner Tom Hicks is dedicated, having added one of the game's premier players in Alex Rodriguez.

"I looked at the opportunities around this franchise," Hart said when he joined the Rangers. "The Ballpark is a very special place to play. I watched a club that struggled and still drew almost three million people. There is a core and nucleus of quality players that are in place here. With the proper leadership and proper tweaking and personnel, I don't feel that this is a club that is that far away from contending."

In order to acquire high-caliber arms capable of improving the pitching staff, decisions had to be made. Every club deals with such determinations in an attempt to build a winner. But Hart and new assistant general manager Grady Fuson wasted little time in changing the face of the Rangers, both on and off the field.

One of the first additions to the staff was Orel Hershiser, a former major league pitcher who still

holds the major league record of throwing 59.0 consecutive scoreless innings in 1988. Hershiser, who had played for Hart in Cleveland, is a proven major league veteran and former 20-game winner. He was elated to join the team and be reunited with Hart as an associate to the general manager.

"I want to learn the baseball industry from the inside-out and there is no better man to learn that from than John Hart," Hershiser said when he was hired. "This is going to be an exciting place to work."

Also joining the team during the month of November were the new members of manager Jerry Narron's coaching staff. While Rudy Jaramillo, one of the game's most respected hitting coaches, was retained, new faces were added in every other role.

Heading the new crop of leaders was Terry Francona as bench coach. The former Philadelphia Phillies manager worked as a special assistant under Hart during the 2001 season in Cleveland. His duties with the Indians covered a wide range of tasks, including some scouting work and dealing with the minor leagues. The experience gave Francona a chance to learn a lot about the Rangers' boss.

"He's very organized," Francona said of Hart. "He's very creative, intelligent and you don't outwork him. The other thing is, he hires people and lets them work."

Along with the new coaching staff came three of Hart's closest allies in evaluating players and teams. Dom Chiti, Jay Robertson and Tom Giordano were added to the club as the general manager's closest collaborators. Giordano has a long history with Hart, having given him his first job as a manager at Bluefield in 1982.

Giordano was working for the Orioles when he discovered Hart coaching a high school baseball team in Orlando. Impressed with the way Hart's team conducted themselves and the way they played, Giordano met with him after the game and offered him a job. Hart accepted and managed in the Baltimore system until 1988, when he was named to the major league coaching staff.

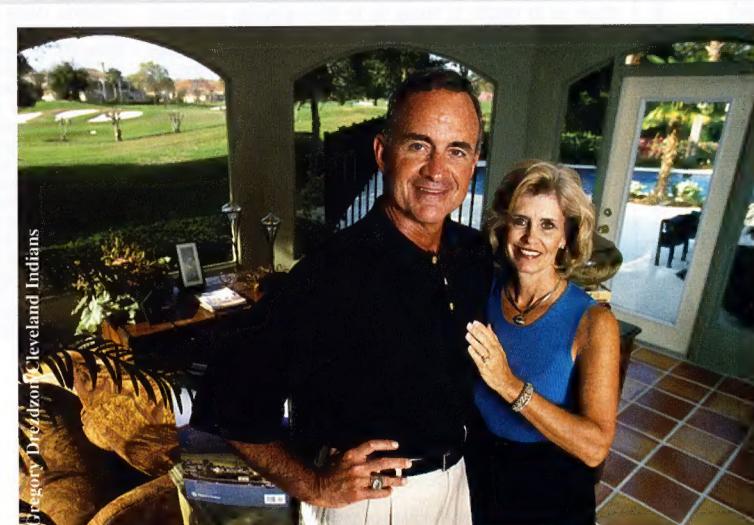
Hart resisted the Orioles' third base coaching job at first, hoping to join Giordano and general manager Hank Peters in their new roles in Cleveland. Hart would be reunited with the duo the following year as a Special Assignment Scout.

"(Hart) was there one year and then Mr. Peters made it clear that he was going to retire in a couple years," Giordano explained. "I told him that John Hart should be the man to replace him. Hank accepted that."

While Giordano has a long history with Hart, he has an even longer history in the game. He has been in professional baseball for 53 years as a player, coach, scout and executive. Among those in baseball circles, Giordano might know Hart the best.

"The guy's unusual, he's got a touch about him," Giordano said. "The guy never sleeps. This man is so thorough in what he's doing. He's one of a kind, believe me."

The whole time he was filling out his staff, Hart began to add players...



Gregory Drevlin/Cleveland Indians
Hart and his wife Sandi have been married 31 years and have a daughter, Shannon. They are looking forward to living in Texas, but will also keep their home in Florida.